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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [UN](#) [SZ](#)
SUBJECT: SWISS INITIATIVES TO COUNTER TORTURE

REF: STATE 70129

¶1. (SBU) Poloff delivered reftel request July 27 to Ralf Heckner, Head of the Human Rights Policy Section in the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Heckner was encouraged by the recent USG response to the issue of torture, noting that the decision to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay was "great news" and would allow the U.S. to "regain the moral high ground." Heckner also noted that the Swiss were pleased the USG had decided to join the UN Human Rights Council.

¶2. (SBU) In response to reftel, Heckner described the following initiatives undertaken by the Swiss to counter torture:

-- On the multilateral front, the Swiss support the UN Special Procedures to investigate and monitor human rights problems. Switzerland provides the funding for one of the assistants to the Special Rapporteur on Torture, and seconds a FDFA officer to that position on a rotating basis. Switzerland was instrumental in founding the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) in 2002, even before Switzerland was a UN member;

-- The GoS routinely engages in bilateral diplomacy to counter torture in other countries. For example, Heckner said that Switzerland consistently calls on Iran to end its use of corporal punishment;

-- Also bilaterally, the FDFA encourages its ambassadors to follow up with host countries that have been assessed by the Special Rapporteur on Torture six months after the Rapporteur's visit. Heckner said that this reinforces to the host country the importance of the Special Rapporteur's findings and recommendations;

-- The GoS has sent experts to China, Vietnam, and Russia to train prison directors and police officers on how to manage detainees humanely. In Russia, Switzerland has also worked with the directors of juvenile detention facilities toward this end;

-- The GoS provides approximately USD 235,000 (CHF 250,000) annually to each of the following Geneva-based NGOs that are working to counter torture:

- a. Association pour la prevention de la torture (APT)
- b. Organisation mondial contre la torture (OMCT)

CARTER